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It has been brought to our attention that the advertising bureau of the milling industry is stating that the Bureau of Home Economics in the food budgets presented in two publications of the Department of Agriculture (Circular 296 and Miscellaneous Publication 183) is attempting to restrict the use of wheat and wheat products and is implying that nutrition authorities outside the Government would not agree to the statement on page 2 of Circular 296 that "the general use of either of the two diets at the higher levels of nutritive content would *** improve the health and efficiency of the population."

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To support its argument, the milling industry is comparing the allowances of grain products in our suggested food budgets with the disappearance of wheat attributed to human consumption, and is circularizing letters signed by Doctors Mendel and McCollum in support of the liberal use of wheat. These letters have appeared among the paid advertisements in some of the scientific journals, such as the Journal of the American Medical Association. They are couched in general terms but special emphasis is given by the milling industry to a quotation from Doctor McCollum's letter to the effect that "wheat flour might well make up 40 percent of the diet of the American people."

In response to numerous requests from home economists in various parts of the country for information on the matter, I am enclosing two memoranda which present some of the pertinent facts:

1. A comparison of the allowances of grain products in the food budgets suggested in Circular 296 with present consumption of these products and with food trends.
2. Quotations from scientific writings of nutrition experts with reference to dietary changes at different levels of income and the nutritional significance of such changes.

We would be glad to answer any questions you may have on this matter, or to hear from you as to any aspects of it that come to your attention.

Sincerely yours,

Louise Stanley,
Chief.

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A Comparison of the Allowances of Grain Products in
Food Budgets Suggested in Circular 296 with
Present Consumption of these Products
and with Food Trends

Circular 296, "Diets at four levels of nutritive content and cost," and Miscellaneous Publication 183, "Food budgets for nutrition and production programs," both present four diet plans, worked out to guide food selection of families at different income levels.

In these plans the quantity of grain products varies. Far from disparaging the use of grain products, as implied by the milling industry, Circular 296 points out on page 7, that bread, flour, and cereals "yield for the expenditure excellent returns in calories, protein, phosphorus, and iron." In the low-cost diets, these facts are fully recognized, and the suggested quantities of grain products exceed computed average consumption per capita per year for the period 1925-29. The "restricted diet" plan includes 240 pounds and the "minimum-cost adequate diet" plan includes 224 pounds of flour and cereal per capita per year, whereas the average consumption is usually estimated at 220 pounds.

Our growing knowledge of nutrition, however, clearly points to the desirability of varied diets which include a large proportion of the "protective foods" (milk, vegetables, and fruits). The two more expensive diet plans presented in Circular 296 include, therefore, large proportions of the foods that yield high-quality proteins and nutritionally significant minerals and vitamins, -- elements contributing to better-than-average health. But in order to keep all of the suggested diets about equal in calorie value, the more expensive diets which include increased quantities of milk, succulent vegetables, fruits, eggs, and lean meats, include less of dried legumes, potatoes, and grain products than is consumed at present, on the average. The quantity of grain products in the "moderate-cost adequate diet" amounts to 160 pounds per capita per year, and to 100 pounds in the "liberal diet."

The figures for grain products in the four diet plans cannot, however, be compared directly with the estimated average consumption of 220 pounds. This latter figure is computed from statistics on production, export, import, allowances for seed, feed, and the wastes of distribution. The residual figure of 220 pounds thus obtained for human consumption includes a much larger allowance for household waste than do the four food budgets. The total volume of food "estimated as consumed" yields about 3,350 calories per person per day. This presumes household waste amounting to almost 20 percent of the calories. Only a minimal allowance -- about 5 percent -- was made for household waste in the food budgets. Hence, for direct comparison with the food budgets shown in Circular 296, the computed consumption of grain products should be reduced by about 15 percent, or from 220 pounds to approximately 187 pounds per person per year.

As stated on page 4 in Circular 296, the majority of families in the

United States during the years 1922 to 1929 spent for food an amount midway between the retail values of the minimum- and moderate-cost adequate diets. Had they purchased food in accordance with our diet plans -- consumption of grain products would have been midway between 224 and 160 pounds per person per year, or about 192 pounds. This is practically the amount estimated as consumed between 1925 and 1929, (187 pounds) when the computed consumption figures are reduced to the calorie basis used in the food budgets in Circular 296.

The fact that our recommendation with regard to grain products for the average family with present average purchasing power is practically at the level of present average consumption does not, however, mean that present food habits are ideal food habits from the standpoint of good nutrition. With increased purchasing power and with an appreciation of the benefits of good diet to physical vigor and efficiency, the trend in food consumption will undoubtedly be toward the increased use of the "protective foods" -- dairy products, leafy and green-colored vegetables, and fruits, with a consequent decrease in the total quantities of other foods.

It is well known that families who can afford a varied and flavorful diet now consume more dairy and livestock products, more vegetables and fruits and less grain products than formerly and also more than is now eaten by families with more restricted incomes. It seems inevitable that this trend will continue. Improvements in the production of vegetables, fruits, dairy and livestock products, along with the improved facilities for transportation and preservation, have brought to the public an abundant year-round supply of many foods that once were available only in certain localities and during certain seasons. There is no reason then to expect a reversal of these food consumption trends, especially at the higher income levels.

These shifts in food consumption need not mean much curtailment in grain production for domestic use in this country, but will mean that a larger proportion of the grain produced will be used for the feeding of livestock for milk, meat, and fat production, and a lesser proportion directly for human food. Nor do these shifts mean a general reduction in the acreage devoted to the nation's food supply. According to estimates of the Program Planning Division of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, it would take practically as much land to produce the "moderate-cost adequate diet" as it took to produce the food supply apparently consumed in 1925-29, and it would take considerably more to produce the "liberal diet" for everyone.

Agriculture must adjust production to meet changing demand. An enlarged purchasing power for the majority of families in this country could mean a greatly expanded industry -- not because more food would be eaten, but because of a change in the kind and quality of the food consumed.

The publications cited indicate what will probably be the course of food consumption at different income levels, as judged both by our potential food supply and by our present knowledge of nutrition, and thus, these plans can serve as a guide to a balanced agricultural program.

Quotations from scientific writings of nutrition experts with reference to dietary changes at different levels of income and the nutritional significance of such changes

In a "memorandum for members of Congress from wheat-producing States, farmers, and others interested in wheat and wheat products," a publicity agency of the milling industry charges:

"Subversive influences within the Government itself, centered in the Bureau of Home Economics, are striving further to reduce this consumption of grain products by urging an 'ideal' diet in which the recommended consumption of wheat for human food is reduced to a maximum of nearly one half.....

"Medical and scientific opinion outside Government bureaus strongly recommends the eating of more rather than less wheat."

In further objecting to the "liberal diet" presented in Circular 296, this agency states that "such eminent authorities as Dr. E. V. McCollum of the Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland; Dr. Lafayette B. Mendel of Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, and Dr. Alonzo Taylor of Stanford University, California, (agree) that there was no physiological reason for the recommendation of a decreased consumption of wheat products, but that the consumption could be safely increased."

In an accompanying memorandum the Bureau of Home Economics compares the allowances of grain products in the food budgets presented in Circular 296 with present consumption of flour and cereals in this country. It is pointed out that the four food budgets presented are formulated for families at different levels of income. The food budgets for the average American family with its present purchasing power include about the quantity of grain products now estimated as consumed, if allowances for household waste are reduced to a comparable basis.

It is also pointed out, however, that the food budgets for well-to-do families, (and those who can produce much of their own food), include more vegetables, fruits and milk than is consumed at present. This shift in food habits will inevitably mean lowered consumption of other foods.

Opinion of Dr. Mendel - That such shifts in diet habits have been taking place in recent years is noted by Doctor Mendel, who states in the Journal of the American Medical Association, July 9, 1934, (p. 120):

"The greater use of so-called protective foods, including fruits and vegetables, has become widespread. The insistent propaganda for the more liberal inclusion of milk in the regimen of the old as well as the young is finding acceptance. It is too early to determine the possible effects of

some of the changing food habits through which in turn meats and then the cereals have lost some of their former dominant popularity. There are signs that many of our adolescents are growing somewhat more rapidly than in former generations. Is this an outcome of our modern education and advertising? It is a wholesome trend? It is too early to answer these questions with conviction; but our menus have indeed changed."

Opinion of Dr. Sherman - That such shifts are probably wholesome is indicated by Doctor Sherman in an address "Foods for Health Protection," given at the June convention of the American Home Economics Association, which will appear in the October Journal of Home Economics:

"Research is also needed upon the extremely important question, How much of the protective foods does one need in order to get the full benefit which they are capable of yielding? Until this question can be studied even more comprehensively than it has been, I think it is well to provide at least half of the needed calories in the form of protective foods; and also that at least half of the breadstuffs and cereals used be in the 'whole grain,' or 'dark,' or 'unskimmed' forms. These two simple suggestions take account of all known nutritional needs. Whether further specification will be needed to secure the best results (or whether any lower standard will serve as well) can be ascertained with certainty only by further research.

"Each of the two simple suggestions just offered will, as it comes to be more generally followed, gradually shift the emphasis of the consumer demand. We know that people in general are rather slow to improve their food habits; and therefore we can be confident that the shifts in consumer demand will be so gradual that food producers can easily adjust themselves to keep pace, and probably with no relative increase in the prices of the protective foods. There is sound health reason for, and no sound economic reason against, a growing prominence of the protective foods in the American food supply."

Opinion of Dr. McCollum - In McCollum's letter dated November 29, 1933, used in advertisements by General Mills, Incorporated, and also circulated through other channels by the milling industry, the statement is made that "wheat flour might well make up 40 percent of the diet of the American people."

It is certain that Doctor McCollum had low-income groups and not the entire American population in mind when he made that suggestion, inasmuch as in the last edition of "Food, Nutrition and Health," published in August, 1933, he says (p. 121):

"We are eating too much refined cereal products such as white flour, refined corn meal, polished rice, and cereal breakfast foods, potatoes, and sugar, and not enough of the 'protective foods.'" Also in this volume Doctor McCollum recommends different proportions of grain products in three diet plans, depending on the income level. His recommendations range from 40 percent of the calories in the case of low-cost diets to 20 percent of the calories in the case of high-cost diets. The income range covered by Doctor McCollum is narrower than that considered in the four diet plans

presented in Circular 296. The latter includes a range in calories from grain products amounting in the "restricted" diet to 43 percent; in the "minimum-cost adequate diet" to 35 percent; and in the "liberal diet" to 15 percent of the calories.

These comparisons make it clear that the food budgets suggested in Circular 296 are not out of line with "scientific opinion outside of Government opinion," but that they reflect the current interpretation of the knowledge of nutrition and food economics.

